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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PRISTINA 000513

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USUN FOR DREW SCHUFLETOWSKI, USOSCE FOR STEVE STEGER

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SUBJECT: KOSOVO: THACI OK WITH ELECTION DELAY IF HIS PARTY
BROUGHT INTO GOVERNMENT (IT WON'T BE)

REF: PRISTINA 491

Classified By: COM PHILIP S. GOLDBERG FOR REASONS 1.4 (B) AND (D).

11. (C) SUMMARY. Hashim Thaci, the head of the opposition Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), met on June 9 with heads of Contact Group diplomatic liaison offices in Pristina. He outlined his thoughts on what he called the failure of the current government to accomplish its domestic tasks, in particular to work to consensus on the timing of new municipal elections. Kosovo's current "lack of leadership," he said, has led Kosovo to an "institutional vacuum" from which internationals should support the creation of a grand coalition, which he described as a "technical government," to include his PDK. Contact Group representatives were uniformly unimpressed with Thaci's proposal. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) Hashim Thaci, president of the opposition Democratic Party of Kosovo (PDK), hastily asked to meet with heads of Contact Group diplomatic liaison offices on June 9. He welcomed the Contact Group's (CG) 13 point document on standards (reftel), and promised that PDK will do all it can to implement the points for the good of Kosovo's status process.

13. (C) Turning to the real substance of the meeting, Thaci then asked CG representatives to consider "the negative effects of SRSG Soren Jessen-Petersen's decision to postpone local elections" originally slated for October 2006. Characterizing the decision as "unjust" and imposed and "without debate," Thaci said the PDK "feels ignored and insulted" at the letter the SRSG sent by email to the party which proposed postponing the elections for at least six months. (NOTE: Representatives of coalition partners the Democratic League of Kosovo (LDK) and the Alliance for the Future of Kosovo (AAK), as well as the PDK's own Fatmir Limaj and representatives from Slavisa Petkovic's ethnic-Serb SDS party have all told USOP that they favor postponement, saying their available resources are tied up in the final status process. Only representatives of Veton Surroi,s Reform Party Ora (PRO), which currently holds no municipal positions, have told USOP that they favor holding elections this year. END NOTE.)

14. (C) Thaci said that postponement of local elections would mean "the continuation of bad government" which he said was confirmed by recent auditor general reports of several municipalities which noted fiscal misfeasance. (NOTE: PDK holds majority power in two of Kosovo's 30 municipalities. END NOTE.) Evidently accepting that the elections will be delayed in the end, Thaci proposed that "a true government of unity" be created to serve until elections are held. Not surprisingly, Thaci sees this "technical government" including his PDK. In addition to establishing unity, Thaci said this so-called "technical government" would "reinforce the rule of the President." (NOTE: Kosovo's Constitutional Framework lays out a parliamentary system in which the President of Kosovo has symbolic but very little practical authority. The President does, however, serve as the head of Kosovo's negotiating team. END NOTE.) The culmination of Thaci's grand scheme would be a decision by this broad technical government on the timing and implementation of the elections.

15. (C) COMMENT. Thaci's plan is predictably self-serving. A recent general political opinion survey (reported septel) that Thaci has done his best to keep unpublished, reveals a decrease in popular support for him and the PDK. To request an imposed international solution evidences Thaci's desperation to have more influence governing Kosovo than his seat on the negotiating team allows. Given the incredulous reaction to his proposal by Contact Group liaison office heads, little sympathy or interest exists for Thaci's proposal. Most feel that municipal elections in the fall would only exacerbate political divisions and lead to another boycott by Serbs, who would surely wait to see how final status talks conclude. In the SRSB's press release on the

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election issue on April 27, he expressed a desire to avoid distracting Kosovo's political leaders and general population during the status process. We agree that a divisive election period would certainly promote disunity at a time when political stability in Kosovo is of utmost importance. END COMMENT.

16. (U) U.S. Office Pristina clears this cable for release in its entirety to U.N. Special Envoy for Kosovo Martti Ahtisaari.
MCBRIDE